

IN THE TENEMENTS.

A Day's Adventures
of a Woman Inspector.

"These are my beauties," said the woman inspector.

This reference applied to two adjoining houses on Battle row, being named strictly in accordance with the usual characteristics of its people.

The inspector and her companion entered the front door, passed through the hall and issued from the back door into a disreputable courtyard with a disreputable rear tenement bounding it on the further side. In fact, everything about the two beauties was disreputable.

The rear tenement was vacant on the ground floor, having been cleared in order to carry out the orders of the Tenement House Department. The inspector had dropped in to see if the execution of these orders had begun. It had not.

The walls and ceilings were black. The stairs were broken. The floor was carpeted

street, where the air seemed singularly soft and vernal by contrast. "You mustn't think they are all as bad as that."

The next one was not so bad. It was the kind that would probably be marked 80 on the inspector's report; decently clean, although an ancient and fishlike smell hung about the corridors.

The inspector's errand here was to ascertain the cause of an urgent complaint which had been turned in at the office concerning certain rooms alleged to be a nuisance. She climbed and climbed, moving with no information till she reached the top.

"Must be here," she said, "as long as it isn't anywhere below."

She made her way toward the front of the top floor, hunting for the flat that was a nuisance. On an icebox just outside the front door stood a pie, freshly baked. It was a lemon pie, with a snowy wreath of

clean, soft voiced woman ready to answer questions.

The pie had proved a true prophet.

The author of the pie was telling all about it, in soft tones.

A widower it was, in the rear flat, she said; he had two sons; they all worked and kept bachelor's halls, and really, really, it was very bad. Floor hadn't been swept for six months. Didn't believe they ever washed the dishes. Never washed any bed-ding. Bugs? Yes, ma'am. Can't keep them out of her own rooms, when so many in there. No one to look after them or keep the house; it's too bad, too bad; but warm weather is coming, and it is sure to be very unhealthy.

She didn't admit it, but it evidently was she who had sent the complaint, her house-widely instincts regretfully concerning her

complaint. However, she said, it wouldn't be necessary for the tenement house department to do anything now. The untidy widower had received a dispossess notice, and would be moving out tomorrow, and then the flat could be shoveled out and scraped and sandpapered.

So the inspector and her companion went away, the latter casting a longing eye at the pie she passed.

"I'll bet it's a good one," she said.

Out on the sidewalk stood a group of

"Those things have been here since Thursday night," said the inspector, "and now it's Monday. The city usually gets them into municipal storage before this time. It's pretty expensive to get them out. I've known families to leave them in and buy new furniture. The family has evidently gone in with some friends, and not found the money yet to move."

"And the furniture can stand out over night without getting stolen?" demanded the companion.

"It would be a pretty tough character that would steal a dispossessed man's furniture," replied the inspector. "The poor are mighty good to each other in such cases. I never knew dispossessed furniture on the sidewalk to be touched."

The inspector opened a door and walked in the calm way that she has. She walked through to the rear to inspect the fire escape, and finding they had wooden ladders instead of iron ones, made a note for a notice to the landlord.

A large, motherly looking woman eyed her brass buttons as she came out.

"Are you the inspector lady now?" she inquired, in a friendly tone.

The inspector said she was.

"Sure, darlin', I did you run the big fat man out of his job?" said the large woman, confidentially.

"Oh, no," said the inspector with a merry smile. "He's just gone to work on another job."

For some occult reason the large woman was not convinced. She gave a labored wink and said:

"Faith, an' I do like to see a little bit of a woman like you run a big fat man out of a job."

The inspector was about 4 feet 11, and the friendly resident was evidently impressed by the difference between her and her predecessor.

This is a great woman's rights district, at least so far as equal pay for equal work is concerned. The girls are all obliged to be self-supporting, and they are intensely interested in the phase of the economic question.

They often stop the inspector on the stairs to inquire if she gets the same pay as the men, and invariably remark that they are glad of it when they hear that she does. Even the policeman on that post incident from his dignity sufficiently to stop her and ask the same question once.

There was another mark of friendly interest as they came out of the next house.

"An' you jest just blarneyed off you, going up and down them stairs all day?" inquired a woman who was sitting on the front steps.

"Used to be when I first began," said the inspector, "but they've got over it now."

"Well, I hope they give you damn good pay," said the woman, placidly.

"No, the need to be blarneyed," said the inspector, as they walked away. "It doesn't mean any more than 'Great Scott.'"

"Great Scott," said the woman, "it means a handy for illustration."

Having inspected six houses from top to bottom, and made several reports, the inspector knocked off for luncheon. At 2 o'clock, there was an appointment with a practical plumber on the staff to hunt for a certain leak that the lady eyes less experienced than a plumber's.

Two houses stood side by side, each owned by a resident landlord. The cellar of one house was periodically traversed by spring

freshets from the other, which stood six feet higher. In consequence, a regular Mintague and Capulet feud prevailed between the two houses, passed down as a tradition in various city departments.

The party met at the basement steps of the house supposed to be the offender.

The plumber was a big, fat man. The in-

directly beneath it. It seemed somewhat startling to have one's parlor floor lined so closely with waste pipes.

While the plumber and inspector were on their knees hunting for the leak in the pipe, the owner of the house came in (a tiny, ancient, haggard face a network of carved wrinkles, like a gnome.



HUNTING FOR THAT LEAK.

spector denied that he was the big fat man whom she had run out of his job, but, as has been seen, her statements in regard to this matter did not inspire confidence.

"We'd like to see your waste pipes," said the big fat man, indignantly, and hunt and hunt and never found no leak. That house always had water, before this house was built, you see. It must have water, because it's deeper, you see."

The parlor floor having disclosed no secrets, the party changed its base to the hall basement, where the pipes were found to be in one of the coal closets, which was locked. The old woman declared she had no key.

"Come now," said the big fat man in a wheedling tone, "don't hold us back now. If you do, we'll have to come back again."

The little old woman raised her hands to Heaven.

"Would I hold you back?" she said. "I have no key. The lady who lives in this coal closet, she lives on the third floor."

A trip to the third floor revealed that the lady was out.

"May I take off the staple?" said the big fat man, patiently.

"Do you want me to give permission?" demanded the little old woman. "What I want is a key. If she says some one else at the wood?"

"We'll engage not to take any wood," said the big fat man, gravely.

The inspector's pipes were laid bare, and found dry as a bone. Then the plumber took a bottle of reddish paint and put some of it in the hole which turned it green. The party migrated to the cellar of the next house to see if the green came through.

They sat about on boxes and barrels and watched a hole in the wall for a long time.

them politely, and then, in a careless, off-hand way, flung back a section of the parlor floor and disclosed a network of pipes

"Oh, my gracious," said she, with the accent of a tragedienne; "you have after that leak twice again! I tell you, there is no leak there. The Board of Health came many times, and they found no leak, and hunt and hunt and never found no leak. That house always had water, before this house was built, you see. It must have water, because it's deeper, you see."

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They sat about on boxes and barrels and watched a hole in the wall for a long time.

It was a damp little hole, and there was damp all over the cellar. But no green came out, and the inspector and the lady who watched the cellar, and the lady who looked sternly on, holding a candle to light the scene.

"She has some way of stopping off the fire," she said. "There's no water running here now, and there won't be for a few years, unless there should be a heavy rain. It's a mill dam here. It's a mill dam."

The lady of the house had descriptive powers. "Thirteen years the city of New York has been hunting of it in there, but it's a mill dam, and never found it yet."

She surveyed the employees of the city with gloomy scorn, as if to ask what good they were, anyway.

Eventually it was decided that the plumber should make a floating appointment to come up the first time it rained and try the green stuff on the roof of the next house and so, after two hours spent with the mystery of the tenement house leak, it was solved.

"Now for my last cell," said the inspector.

"It's a complete lot, and it's on the top floor again. But from all I hear, it's worth going after."

The appearance and conversation of the jailer demonstrated the truth of this opinion. The jailer had her head tied up and looked as if she had come in contact with some hard object. From her story it appeared that the tenant of the sixth floor was a person of some force of character.

Owing to a propensity of said tenant and her husband to hold mixed-ale parties of a Saturday night, to which they invited all their friends, which usually damaged the attentions of the police, the jailer had been ordered to make a formal report on the public nuisance of the house throughout.

They climbed the bulkhead stairs and stepped out on the roof. One minute after the bulkhead door closed with a snap and the key turned in the lock.

The inspector sat down on the roof and laughed coarsely.

"Madam," said she solemnly, "you are a genius. I take off my hat to genius wherever I find it."

A tenant did not mind. She watched her visitors out with an evil eye, and stood in her door to look after them.

"As long as we get into a fight with the city of New York, now have you?"

The woman declared after a while that she had, and briefly consigning the "case" of New York to a warm place she admitted the inspector. That personage passed a very interesting quarter of an hour.

A more ingenious revenge on a hard-working housekeeper could hardly have been planned. The woman had flung the drawers of the stationary wardrobe with their contents on the roof.

The drawers were packed with a choice assortment of potato parings, solidified with ashes, which had been dumped in carefully, in order that the poor housekeeper would have to sift every particle of it. Having filled these receptacles, she had begun on the shelves of the dish closet, piling the dishes on the roof and table to make room.

The inspector made a few notes on a pad, and then took off her little black felt hat, with its gilt band and trim, and the wall.

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"I think so, too," said the inspector, as she started up the stairs and looked at the woman who was standing at the door. "The woman must have been an agreeable spirit of originality," she remarked, as she climbed steadily. "This is the last degree to get even with the housekeeper; to hold up the garbage as she'll have to clean it up."

The sixth floor tenant declined definitely to let the inspector enter her flat. More, she refused with exceeding contumely. The inspector, having inserted the toe of her boot between the door and the wall, pushed her brass buttons at the tenant with an engaging smile.

"Come now," said she, "you've got too much sense to get into a fight with the city of New York, now have you?"

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